

BA 1259

8/78

Fisher House

Reisterstown, Maryland

Private Access

147 MAIN STREET is of log construction, once common but now quite rare. Its survival in this urban area is especially unusual. It is one of the earliest structures remaining in Reisterstown.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Fisher House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

147 Main Street

6th

CITY, TOWN

Reisterstown

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

J. Oscar Fisher (Tenant--R.O. Jones)

Telephone #: 833-3228

STREET & NUMBER

147 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Reisterstown

VICINITY OF

No. 147 Main Street

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21136

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Baltimore County Courthouse

Land Records

Liber #: 1017

Folio #: 557

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Towson,

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS --none

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Berryman-Fisher House, 147 Main Street, Reisterstown. This is a late Victorian house in frame and clapboard, rubber roof; front porch, w. tin roof; peaked gable with arched window in front; also a back building two stories, also with tin roof. . . House is now immediately north of an Amoco station (the one that replaced the Yellow Tavern. The deed proves that the house was the first structure north of that "Brick Hotel." M.B.W.

A two storey log house, covered with weatherboards, three bays in length, facing the street to the west. Formerly with interior chimneys at each end, only the south chimney remains. Extending east behind its northerly end is a two storey rear wing two bays in length. Former corner boards and the presence of an interior partition suggest that a space of some $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet once separated the rear wing from the main house. This space is now filled with frame construction continuous with the rear wing. The rear wing was not accessible for inspection.

The front portion of this house dates from the early 19th century. It measures approximately 19 by 29 feet. The rear wing measures approximately 16 by 20 feet.

The principal entrance is centered in the west front and a one storey porch extends across that front. Windows are 6/1, but they were 6/6; the mutins of the lower sashes have been removed. Windows have narrow beaded frames and louvred blinds. A later gable centered in the west front is finished with fancy-butt wood shingles and it contains an arched window. Plain boxed cornices are at the eaves and the similar rake cornices rise from similar eave returns.

Two rooms are in each storey and the stair rises east of the south chimney. All interior finishes and details are modern except for the corner-block architraves at the windows and a ledge door of beaded boards in the southerly room of the second storey.

In the cellar beneath the principal or front section of the structure, an arch supports the hearth of the southerly fireplace above; it is now interrupted by a later flue for the furnace. A solid stone foundation is beneath the northerly chimney. First floor joists are of log.

The attic is accessible by a pull-down stair in the northwest corner. The hewn oak rafters are half-lapped and pegged at the ridge. Studs of the gables are attached with large wrought nails. The later gable in the front roof slope has a ridge board. The wall shingles are attached to shingle lath.

The rear wing (not inspected) formerly had a large fireplace at its east end, with an enclosed winding stairway to its north. Its second storey does not communicate with that of the main house.

147 MAIN STREET is of log construction, once common but now quite rare. Its survival in this urban area is especially unusual. It is one of the earliest structures remaining in Reisterstown.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

BA-1259

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

147 Main Street, to research, has presented almost insuperable difficulties. Until 1796, the ownership of the house and property is easy to locate and follow. During a brief four-year period events become quite intricate and difficult, between 1796 and 1800. Then, from 1800 to 1875, the situation is one of conjecture. We know who had the property in 1800--that is clear, but what he did with it and how the Banks family got the property is not at all clear, though the family lost the house is quite clear. Then from 1890 to the present the line of ownership is without question, absolutely clear.

Paradoxically, it is easier to trace the property during the 1700's than it is for the 1800's. This property was once part of the Spring Garden and patent and was originally composed of the first two lots, once divisions were made.¹ The original patent was made by Duncan Coleman and his wife (written as Dunkin Coalman),² who retained the 140-acre grant for only a couple of years. Then for a thirty-year period or so it passed through several hands, most land speculators, finally reaching The Reverend Benedict Swope's in 1767.³ Not only a Lutheran minister, Swope also had an eye out for earthly gain; within a year or so had laid off a few lots on the east side of the Conepage Road. One of his first buyers was Jacob Medairy, an immigrant originally from Switzerland and late of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, area and brother-in-law of Daniel Bower, an early settler of the developing area. Medairy had located in the present Reisterstown area in 1762 but not until 1769 did he acquire legal title to land of his own, the first two lots of Spring Garden fronting on the road and adjacent to Reisters Desire.⁴ He then proceeded to build quite an establishment on the property by building a brick inn (1779) called the Yellow Tavern--a store and a tavern, and several other buildings. The log part of the present house possibly could have preceded the hotel. During the Revolution a shoe manufacturing business was developed on the property, supplying shoes to the Maryland Council of Safety "for use of the troops."⁵ (This was right next door to the present 143 Main Street where a shoemaking business was long conducted, but the evidence indicates that the two similar businesses were unrelated.) A patriot, Jacob Medairy (really Jacob Medairy II, since his father was Hans Jacob Medairy), signed the Oath of Fidelity in 1778.⁶ (Ten years earlier he had signed the petition to move the county courthouse from Joppa to Towson.)⁷ This Jacob Medairy, though, did not live long enough to enjoy the fruits of his enterprise, for at the age of fifty, in 1785, he died in-state, his oldest son, another Jacob, inheriting the property by right of primogeniture. Though he was young, only 23, this Jacob continued the business and copying his uncle Daniel Bower, began buying and selling lots in his uncle's

(continued)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Primary Sources:

Federal Direct Assessment of 1798, Soldier's Delight Hundred, Particular List of Martin Merryman.
Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

Land Records, Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Maryland.
CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4/10

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

"Beginning at a point in or near the east side of the Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike road the end of a line drawn north nine and one fourth degrees west fifty one feet seven inches from the north west corner of the Brick hotel and running thence north eighty six and one half degrees east three hundred and thirty two feet and six inches to a marked post in the fence thence north three fourths degrees east fifty three feet to a stone in the corner between the lands formerly (sic) owned by Andrew Banks and Christ. Gies thence bounding on said (cont.)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES
(Within the boundaries of Reisterstown, Maryland, and Baltimore County)

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

James Wollon, Jr A.I.A.

and

NAME / TITLE

Mrs. Mary Beale Wright Volunteer HRI

July 1978

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Reisterstown, Inc.

833-1655

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

214 Greenview Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Reisterstown, Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

8. Significance--continued.

Fisher House
Reisterstown, Maryland

BA-1259

grandiosely conceived Washington Town. Eventually he came to grief by the mid-1790's, when he had to mortgage this property⁸ 383 pounds to a Baltimore City banker, Charles Ghequiere, 1796.⁸ A year later Ghequiere passed this mortgage on to John Tolley Worthington, a large landholder in the area.⁹ (This mortgage, however, only seems to cover the first lot--on which the inn was located, that which is now 151 Main Street, the present Amoco station.) From here on, things went straight down hill for Jacob Medairy. In September 1798 he was sent to jail as an insolvent debtor, being released in January 1799 on petition of friends. In April 1799, Worthington foreclosed on the mortgage¹⁰ and on others he also held; Worthington then bought this valuable property at public sale for 800 pounds. To get clear title to the property, Worthington had to get Medairy's wife's interest, which was done on June 7, 1800, for "25 pounds current money."¹¹ (In the meantime the Medairys had removed into the city and eventually recovered their financial health.) Then, throughout the fall of 1800, Worthington the former Medairy property for sale in the Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser on front page: "The subscriber will sell/rent or exchange for land in Kentucky, that large and elegant brick HOUSE and LOT, with the Warehouse, Stables, and all other houses thereon, heretofore occupied by maj. Jacob Medairy, as a dwelling a store house, situate in Reisterstown. The above property is well calculated for a tavern. . . stables sufficient for a number of horses, and water works to convey water to the stable, garden and kitchen. And it is expected that any person who could keep a general assortment of goods, or was acquainted with tavern keeping would meet with great encouragement. The rent will be low to a good tenant--it would be a handsome retreat for a gentleman in the warm season."¹² Also included in the sale was a 170-acre lot.

That Worthington did buy up a valuable property was evident in the 1798 Federal Direct Assessment. The property, one acre, was thus described under number 3216: "One Brick Dwelling House two story 38 by 36 new Brick kitchen two Story 18 by 15 one hew'd Log house two Story weatherboarded 22 by 18, one old Log house 38 by 18, one hew'd Log granary one and 1/2 Story 20 by 16, one hew'd Log and Frame Stable one Story 40 by 34."¹³ All this was valued at \$1000. (Quite possibly the weatherboarded house may be the nucleus of the present house--or the old "Log house 38 by 18.")

From 1800 until 1875 it is almost impossible to say who owned what when. John Tolley Worthington certainly had the property in 1800. Daniel Bower Banks quite definitely had acquired it by 1875 when he willed it to his son, the second Andrew Banks.¹⁴

One possible line of ownership can be set up for Worthington's not being able to sell the property immediately, holding it, and selling later, not to the Banks family immediately--they possibly acquire the property much later. It seems that William Berryman, who had bought the adjacent present-day 143 Main Street in 1803 added this property to his in 1813¹⁵ and then sold all of the property he had accumulated back to Worthington in 1818, including what is now 143 and 147 Main Street.¹⁶ (The problem is, these descriptions give precious few clues; the Medairys never are mentioned, nor is any yellow brick tavern.) Worthington then held on to these properties, selling what is 143 to William Frush in 1827 (See the report on 143 Main Street) but holding what is 147 Main Street and willing it to his grandson and namesake John T. Johns in 1834, with the cryptic description: "All my part of a tract of Land called Spring Garden,"¹⁷ though other properties listed are described in detail. John T. Johns no sooner got the property than he mortgaged it to his father, Richard Johns.¹⁸ There is no clear record of when he may have redeemed this property; at least I have not found it.

(continued)

Sometime after this Daniel B. Banks acquired the property. That is definite, for he did will it to his son, Andrew Banks, in 1875.¹⁹ Banks, a well-to-do Baltimore merchant and grandson (and namesake) of Daniel Bower, during his lifetime accumulated extensive landholdings in Baltimore and in Reisterstown, including the former Bower property where built a large home he named Chatsworth used as a summer home. A "prominent Baltimore City merchant," he "was president of the Union Manufacturing Co., Maryland's oldest textile manufacturer, recipient of the first charter issued by the General Assembly in 1808," located at Oella on the Patapsco River near Ellicott City on land bought from the Ellicotts. The mills then produced cotton goods. 147 Main Street, an acre property, would be negligible to a Daniel B. Banks, but with other acreage could be acquired. Very likely Banks bought it in 1859 from James Warren, who bought the Reister Inn in 1850,²⁰ and who had managed to accumulate other property in town, including a 78-acre tract composed of parts of "Spring Garden" "Goshen Resurveyed," and "Murray's Plains Regulated."²¹ For these tracts Banks paid \$7200. However, only a few weeks earlier, Warren had bought these same tracts from John T. Johns,²² properties Johns had either acquired or had belonged to his grandfather. (As I had said, if Johns had redeemed his mortgaged Spring Garden property, that was not located. This would be the only missing link, if the James Warren connection is correct, which it well can be.)

With Andrew Banks' ownership, the property eventually began to have an uncertain future. In 1877, when the property was listed to "A. Banks" in the Atlas of Baltimore County, it was relatively secure. This Banks, however, more flamboyant than his father, apparently did not have quite same business acumen. The only son in a family of eight, he had studied medicine but gave it up because of ill-health. He then went for a "restoration trip" to South America in "the latter part of 1856" where his ship, the bark "Emily", was wrecked off the mouth of "La Platte River" in January 1857, with Banks barely managing to escape with his life, according to Scharf.²³ (He did manage to have graduated from Dickinson College.) On his return, he turned to quieter pursuits, becoming interested in agriculture and cultivating the Chatsworth estate patented in 1769 for his father's maternal grandfather,²⁴ and making his home there, too. Agriculture was hardly his only interest. In 1872, he was elected to the "Lower House of the General Assembly. ." and became "a member of several prominent committees. . ." ²⁵ He was re-elected in 1874 but stayed out a term in 1876 settling his father's estate and was back in the legislature in 1877 until 1880, being a faithful Democrat. In addition, he was a member of the Boards of Directors of the Union Manufacturing Co., sold in 1887 to the Dickey's; the Annapolis and Elk Ridge Railroad, Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike Company; and president of the Maryland Tubing Transportation Company when it organized. On top of these duties he was a Mason, one of the Charter members of Ionic Lodge No. 45 in 1869; an Odd-Fellow, and an active Episcopalian, as well as a husband and father of six children--four boys and two girls. Somehow, too, he managed to squeeze in numerous land property transactions, holding numerous mortgages and borrowing on his own property, finally so extensively that by the late 1880's he was in serious trouble. Finally a trustee was appointed to liquidate his holdings to satisfy his mortgagors; thus 147 Main Street was again sold as a separate lot, with Richard S. Culbreth, of the Eutaw Savings Bank, acting as the Permanent Trustee for "Andrew Banks, insolvent."²⁶ The buyer was another Berryman, this time Nehemiah Berryman, who bought the property for \$650 at private sale,²⁷ but not all of the original property--only 4/10 of an acre, its present size. 1890

(continued)

From 1890 to the present the line of ownership is absolutely clear. In 1893, Berryman and his wife sold the house in fee simple for \$700 to Jefferson D. Fisher;²⁸ Fisher then held this property for more than forty years, deeding it in 1937 to his son, James Oscar Fisher, the present owner, for that \$5.00 "and other good and valuable considerations" and a stipulation that J. D. Fisher could occupy one room of "said demised premises."²⁹

At present, looking at what seems to be an ordinary frame house that sets adjacent to the Amoco station on the remainder of the original lot, one could scarcely realize the financial disasters incurred by earlier owners nor the many years the house has faced that curve in the Comewago-Reisterstown Turnpike Road-Main Street.

Footnotes:

¹Lillian Bayly Marks. Reister's Desire: The Origin of Reisterstown, Maryland, founded 1758, with a Genealogical History of the Reister Family and Sketches of Allied Families. (Baltimore, Maryland: Garamond/Pridemark Press, 1975), p. 34 (map).

²AM No. 1, folio 244. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

³AL No. D, folio 568-77. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

⁴AL-A, folio 578. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

⁵Bernard John Medairy, Jr. The Medairy Family of Maryland: 1565:1971. Baltimore, Maryland: The Paul M. Harrod Company, 1972), pp. 28-29.

⁶Marks, p. 122.

⁷Medairy, p. 27.

⁸WG No. YY, folio 97-98. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

⁹WG No. 53, folio 375-78. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹⁰Chancery Court records No. 5714. Baltimore County. John Tolley Worthington vs. Jacob Medairy.

¹¹WG No. 62, folio 453. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹²Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser. Saturday, November 8, 1800. Page 1, Column 3.

¹³Marks, p. 209.

¹⁴IHB 41, folio 189-90. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹⁵WG 124, folio 117-19. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹⁶WG 144, folio 549-50. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹⁷DMP 15, folio 110-22. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹⁸TK 242, folio 102-03. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹⁹IHB 41, folio 189-90. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

²⁰Marks, p. 56.

²¹GHC No. 25, folio 257-60. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.
(Also Land Records, Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Maryland.)

8. Significance (continued--4)

Fisher House
147 Main St
Reisterstown, Md

BA-1259

Footnotes--continued.

²²GHC No. 25, folio 323-25. Land Records. Baltimore County Courthouse. Towson, Maryland.

²³J. Thomas Scharf, A.M. History of Baltimore City and County from the Earliest Period to the Present Day Including Biographical Sketches of Representative Men. (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), p. 856.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶JWS 184, folio 146-47. Land Records. Baltimore County Courthouse. Towson, Maryland.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸IMB 198, folio 536-37. Land Records. Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Maryland.

²⁹CWB 1017, folio 557-58. Land Records. Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Maryland.

9. Major Bibliographical References: (continued)

Primary sources--continued

Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser. November 8, 1800. Page 1, Col. 3.

Secondary sources:

Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland, 1877. Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, C.E. (Reprint).

Dickson, Dr. Isaac N. The Early Days of Reisterstown and Vicinity (Written December 1869). With a Foreword by Rev. W. Harold Redcay.

Marks, Lillian Bayly. Reister's Desire: The Origin of Reisterstown, Maryland, founded 1758, with a Genealogical History of the Reister Family and Sketches of Allied Families. Baltimore, Maryland: Garamond/Pridemark Press, Inc., 1975.

Medairy, Bernard John, Jr. The Medairy Family of Maryland: 1565-1971. Baltimore, Md.: The Paul M. Harrod Company, 1972.

Pollack, Carol, Compiler & Editor. Reister's Desire--Reisterstown 1758-1976: Two Centuries plus Two Decades minus Two Years. 1976. (Published privately.)

Scharf, J. Thomas, A.M. History of Baltimore City and County from the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Representative Men. Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881.

10. Geographical Data--Verbal Boundary Description, continued.

Gies land south eighty six degrees west three hundred and forty one feet six inches to the east side of said Turnpike road, and thence bounding on the same south nine and .. fourth degrees east fifty three feet to the beginning containing four tenths of an acre of land, It being the same piece or parcel of land conveyed by Richard S. Culbreth permanent trustee of Andrew Banks estate by deed dated third day of December 1890 and recorded January 8th, 1891, in Liber J.W.S. n. 184 folio 146. . . to Nehemiah Berryman Together with the buildings and improvements thereupon erected. . ."

From Liber LMB 198, folio 536-37.



BA 1259

Fisher House

147 Main St - Reisterstown

Carol Pollack

4-77

West